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TELEGRAM

March 30, 2004

To: No Action Addressee
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From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 923 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: PREL, ETRD, PHUM, KDEM
Captions: None
Subject: U.S.-UAE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP A SUCCESS
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 00923

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CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: PAO RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON
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INFO: PAO

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL:JFMAYBURY
CLEARED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT, ECON:CC, CGD:JD, PAO:HOW

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000923

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STATE FOR NEA/FO, NEA/IAI, NEA/NGA, NEA/ARP, DRL, INL
USTR FOR JASON BUNTIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: U.S.-UAE Strategic Partnership a success

Ref: (A) Abu Dhabi 906, (B) 03 State 16509

Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba, reasons
1.5 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The UAE hosted the second bilateral Strategic Partnership dialogue on March 21 with NEA A/S Burns and UAE Information and Culture Minister

Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayed leading their respective delegations. The two sides reviewed progress on the comprehensive action plan that was agreed upon after the November 2002 launch of the bilateral dialogue in Washington, making special mention of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), an Article 98 agreement, a robust export controls action plan, and ongoing plans to stop the trafficking in persons problem.

¶2. (C) The Abu Dhabi meeting also provided a forum for a frank exchange on the salient regional issues, including Iraq, the Arab-Israeli dispute, Iran, and reforms in the Middle East. Burns and Shaykh Abdullah agreed that the UN needed to play a central role in helping Iraqis conduct their future elections. They shared concerns about Iran's intentions in Iraq and in the region. Shaykh Abdullah urged the U.S. to stay engaged in the peace process. He also welcomed U.S. reforms as long as they were not imposed, and as long as there was recognition that change will not come overnight. During his visit to the UAE, Burns also met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Shaykh Khalifa bin Zayed, a meeting that Abu Dhabi Deputy Crown Prince and UAE Armed Forces COS Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed also attended (see ref A). End Summary.

¶3. (C) NEA A/S Burns and UAE Information and Culture Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) led the U.S. and UAE delegations at the second bilateral Strategic Partnership in Abu Dhabi on March 21. The UAE delegation consisted of MFA Assistant U/S for political affairs, Abdullah Rashid Al Nuaimi; MFA Director for European, American, and Oceanic Affairs, Ahmed Al Muqarrab; MFA Protocol Chief Obaid Al Zaabi; and America desk officers Shaykha Nejla Al Qassimi and Abdul Rahman Al Shamsi. The U.S. side included the Ambassador, DCM, CG, PAO, Polchief and Poloff, and Econoff.

Strategic Partnership: Progress on many fronts

¶4. (C) AbZ expressed satisfaction with the way the bilateral relationship had grown in the past two years and said he hoped it could grow further. A/S Burns said this second Strategic Partnership was a reflection of the strength of the relationship. The Ambassador gave a comprehensive overview of the progress that had been made in all the different areas since the launch of the strategic dialogue (see ref B). She cited trade and investment, military cooperation, law enforcement and counter-terrorism cooperation and training, trafficking in persons, and education. Signing a TIFA on March 15 in Washington, reaching agreement on Article 98, cooperating extensively to counter trafficking in persons, which resulted in moving the UAE from Tier 3 to Tier 1 in the annual Trafficking in Persons report, implementing a robust Export Controls and Related Security (EXBS) program action plan, and opening the Gulf Air Warfare Center for joint exercises at Al Dhafra Air Base have been the major bilateral accomplishments. The Ambassador thanked Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Shaykh Hamdan bin Zayed, who was out of town, for his personal commitment to the Strategic Partnership.

A look ahead

¶5. (C) Bilateral strategic partnership activities will be ongoing. The U.S. is sending a delegation to the UAE to attend the Second International Hawala Conference on April 3-4. An Emirati delegation will head to Washington for the first TIFA Council April

26-27. A/S Rodman will lead the U.S. delegation to the first Joint Military Commission on May 1-2 in Abu Dhabi. The two sides will continue to negotiate a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). The UAE is interested in participating in Middle East Partnership Initiative programs under each of the four pillars. The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which is interested in reopening its programs in the UAE, will continue to encourage the UAEG to pass a new labor law and appropriate amendments that provide for the creation of labor organizations to ensure laborers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. In addition, U.S. and UAE officials both here and in Washington will work together to identify appropriate Codels and Staffdels to visit the UAE. Both sides expressed a desire to encourage more Emirati travel to the U.S. The Emiratis expressed concern about U.S. visa and homeland security procedures that have discouraged travel.

Regional Issues

Iraq:

¶6. (C) AbZ said the UAE is very concerned about developments in Iraq. The UAE knows the U.S. is doing its best to restore stability, but he said there is still work to be done by Americans and Iraqis to ensure a greater UN role, particularly to help Iraqis prepare for elections. Burns said he shared AbZ's concerns and agreed the UN needed to play a central role. The Transitional Administrative Law's completion, as well as the outlines for a process of transfer of sovereignty on June 30 were important steps, he added.

¶7. (C) U/S Abdullah Rashid asked what the impact would be if Spain were to withdraw from the Coalition. Burns acknowledged that there was frustration in Europe, but added that it was absolutely essential for everyone to help the Iraqis succeed. Allowing the UN to play a larger role could help persuade the Europeans to cooperate after the transfer of sovereignty. AbZ agreed that Iraq finds itself in a fragile situation and that everyone's help was needed. He said it was important to convey this message to Spain because their withdrawal from the Coalition would send the wrong signal.

¶8. (C) AbZ asked Burns if the June 30 date for transferring sovereignty would hold. Burns said it would although some problems would remain. The level of U.S. commitment would not change, but it would take a different form. AbZ asked if NATO might play a role in Iraq. Burns said that remained a possibility, although he did not see it happening before June 30. On the economic side, Burns thanked the UAE, a member of the Iraq Core Donors Group, for its financial contribution to Iraq's reconstruction and its forward thinking on Iraqi debt.

Arab-Israeli dispute

¶9. (C) AbZ said the UAE appreciated U.S. support for the peace process, despite the difficulties of dealing with the present Israeli and Palestinian leadership. That said the UAE believes the U.S. can play a more active role. Burns said POTUS was committed to a two-state solution and to the Roadmap, and that this would require everyone's efforts. Burns and AbZ discussed Sharon's plan for disengagement from Gaza and the implications that could have for Gaza's economic and security situation. AbZ said he was concerned that Israel's disengagement, if not carefully planned,

could lead to chaos that extremist groups such as HAMAS would exploit. Burns agreed, but said that to avoid chaos, the PA would need to act responsibly and there would need to be a lot of outside support from donors to provide the social services and other support that HAMAS has provided. Burns thanked the UAE for its generous humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians, noting that economic reconstruction will be crucial if Sharon proceeds with his disengagement plan.
Iran

¶10. (C) The UAE was very worried about the recent elections in Iran because of what happened to the moderates, AbZ said. He reminded the group that Iran still occupies three islands that belong to the UAE. When the moderates were in the parliament in Iran, he said, the UAE and Iran held talks about the islands. "We don't know how things will go now. The picture is quite blurred on that issue," he said. Burns said the U.S. shares the UAE's concerns about Iran, including Iran's nuclear program, WMD capability, and potentially disruptive role in southern Iraq. AbZ cited a BBC poll that revealed a lot about Iraqi attitudes toward Iran. Asked who they would least like to see play a role in Iraq, Iraqi poll respondents ranked Iran behind Israel. AbZ wanted to know if the Iranians were getting clear signals from the U.S. on their activities in Iraq when they crossed "red lines." The U.S. was sending such messages indirectly, Burns said. AbZ and Burns agreed that the Europeans and countries in the region also needed to reemphasize those "red lines." AbZ said that Iran had shown itself to be cooperative in Afghanistan and could do the same in Iraq, which is even more fragile.

Reforms

¶11. (C) AbZ inquired about the Greater Middle East, a concept that Emiratis had only read about in the newspapers. Burns clarified U.S. intentions with regard to reforms and modernization, reassuring AbZ that the U.S. had no intention of trying to impose or dictate change on Arab states. The U.S. was responding to calls from within the region for change. AbZ said the UAE would prefer to have an exchange of views on reforms earlier in the consultative process rather than reading about them in the press. "We were under the impression that there were three or four large Arab states that knew about the initiative, and knew early on," he said. AbZ acknowledged that the region is in need of reform, but "it is not a thing we can do overnight." Burns explained that the coming months would see further consultations at the next G-8 and European summits, along with consultations with Arab states.

¶12. (C) Comment: When the two delegations took stock of the Strategic Partnership activities that have taken place since we launched the dialogue in November 2002, there was consensus that the bilateral relationship has broadened to cover a multitude of new important initiatives. The framework that we have adopted -- working visits and consultations throughout the year punctuated by a high-level plenary session such as the March 21 dialogue in Abu Dhabi -- has proved to be an effective management tool for tracking and promoting bilateral issues. End Comment.
WAHBA